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### Exhibition of Maya Art

The temporary exhibition installed in the Forecourt Room represents a selection from the large collection of objects from Central America belonging to the Peabody Museum of Harvard University. The Museum has been conducting expeditions in this region for more than twenty years.

An attempt has been made to select objects of interest to the visitors of an art museum rather than to represent this, the most important archaeological field of America, in all its aspects.

The probable date which may be assigned to the collection is about the beginning of the Christian era. The Maya culture is one which seems to have grown up independently of any influence either from the East or West, in spite of some startling analogies with certain Asiatic civilizations.

The stone sculptures from Copan, Honduras, are, perhaps, the most striking objects of the exhibition. The great seated female figure (Fig. 1) is from a monumental stairway decorated with lines of hieroglyphs. The stone head (Fig. 2) shows perhaps the very best work "in the round" of the Maya sculptor. The stone lintel from Piedras Negras, Guatemala, is an excellent example of bas-relief. One of the best examples of a Maya hieroglyphic inscription is to be noted to the left and above the six kneeling figures on this lintel.

The Mayas excelled in working in clay. Fig. 3 shows a wonderfully modelled seated figure of a



*Fig. 2*

woman with a second figure resting in her lap. The poise of the head and the modelling of the breasts make a figure worthy of a place among the objects of art in any museum.

The selection of pottery shows painted, incised, and carved designs. The black dishes (Fig. 4), with covers and handles representing jaguar heads and those of other animals, are from burial vaults beneath the floor of rooms. The conventionalization of the animal and human form in the various types of decoration is most important from the point of view of the development of design in general. There is a wonderful harmony of color seen on several of the pieces of pottery and on a selection of sherds.

The collection is extremely rich in carved jades. These show incised design, bas-relief and "the round." The variety of color ranges from black through all the tones of green to almost white. Many of the pieces show the results of fire. They are all from burial deposits and in many cases seem to have been purposely broken. The carved plaques and the carved beads are perhaps the most remarkable of this class of objects.

The ability of the Mayas and the people of the Isthmus in metal working is shown in the collection



*Fig. 1*

*Seated Figure*



Fig. 4

of gold and gold and copper objects. Beaten masks of thin sheets of gold suggest similar Mycenæan objects. Most of the figurines were cast by the *cire perdue* method. The gold and copper bells show a variety of shapes and the figurines present a surprising ability at metal casting. As with the jades, many of the figures show the result of fire.

The skull of a peccary with a beautiful incised design and two carved shell disks show ability on other lines.

Some photographs are shown which give some idea of the buildings of this Central American culture and many of the larger stone objects still remaining in the ruins. A reproduction of the Dresden codex in this case illustrates the manuscripts found in connection with this culture.

Hanging frames show reproductions of the fresco painting on the walls of a temple in northern Yucatan. The spirited drawing of battle scenes and scenes of domestic life give still another side of this wonderful American civilization.

The exhibition will serve to show visitors ignorant of the field of American archæology that there was something in this country in pre-Columbian times worthy of the name of art.

A. M. T.

### A New Chinese Marble

The first fruits of Mr. Okakura's purchases in the Orient have begun to arrive at the Museum. They are all of importance, but the only one to be put on exhibition for the next few months is a Chinese marble of the Tang Dynasty (A. D. 618–A. D. 907). It is the seated figure of a Bodhisattva on an elaborate throne. Unfortunately it has suffered at the hands of vandals, probably the Chinese Mohammedans in their raids on the Northern and Western Provinces. But in spite of the fact that it was broken in two at the waistline and lacks one arm, both hands, and one side of the nose, it has an arresting beauty that makes it comparable with the best stone carving that has come out of China.

Fig. 2 is a reproduction of a similar figure



Fig. 3

privately owned in Japan — the closest parallel of which there is record.

The first impression of the detail of the head is that the sculptor adhered closely to the classical Tang tradition, with perhaps a suggestion of extra refinement and delicacy. The whorls of the elaborately dressed hair have direct relation to the shape of the skull on which they are piled, and their obvious weight seems to have flattened the coil to a springing curve of just the desirable nicety of detail.

The jewel in the forehead of a Buddha or of a Bodhisattva is according to one tradition a mole, to another a curl of hair, and to another an all-seeing eye from which rays of beneficence spread to